

# Shining Light on Authentic Faith

## How Do I know the Truth? [1 John 4:1-6]

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### Jelly Bean Challenge

Is It important to know the difference between sweet/ bitter, delicious/horrific, good/destructive?

Read 1 John 1 John 4:1-6

## The Task of Authentic Faith (4:1)

**1John 5:12** The one who has the Son has life. The one who doesn't have the Son of God does not have life.

**13** I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

God's Word gives us a powerful declaration: the one who believes in Jesus Christ has eternal life! And this life is not something you wait for, it is a powerful immediate transformation and indwelling of the Spirit of God.

This Truth affirms that **you must what you believe**. Eternal truth is found in the person of Jesus Christ. If you do not know what you believe you do not believe. Additionally, Jesus + something = nothing.

It is not enough to know you believe. Because of the glorious truth of Christ, we are called to **know what to believe**.

This is powerfully summed in the old hymn: **on Christ, the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.**

This history of the world is fraught with many spirit, ideas and many false prophet. You see there are many spirit but only one Holy Spirit.

### Spirits/Ideas

John's hearers were dealing with Gnosticism: First, it espouses a dualism regarding spirit and matter. Gnostics assert that matter is inherently evil and spirit is good. As a result of this presupposition, Gnostics believe anything done in the body, even the grossest sin, has no meaning because real life exists in the spirit realm only.

We continue to struggle with ungodly ideas. The **state run church**. That if you add politics + the church you will find freedom. **Materialism**: if you work hard and make a good life for yourself you will find satisfaction. **Easy believism**: is you say this prayer, or enter this baptism, join this church or do these things

you will be saved. **Prosperity gospel:** God wants to give you a good life and make you healthy, wealthy, and give you a clear mind. The evil idea of **convenient cultural Christianity** or cheap grace: I will worship when I have time, serve when I am free, or give when I have enough. Christ gave all for you! We must reject un-goodly wicket ideas.

## Prophets:

During the 1920s, a movement emerged within the German Evangelical Church called the *Deutsche Christen*, or "German Christians." The "German Christians" embraced many of the nationalistic and racial aspects of Nazi ideology. Once the Nazis came to power, this group sought the creation of a national "Reich Church" and supported a "nazified" version of Christianity.

Today we don't call them false prophets: we call it Facebook, fake news, TV evangelists, and memes. We cannot propagate the deception of the antichrist.

***Church you are not called or allowed to be gullible. Rather, be godly.***

How do we unmask false teachers?

John warns us that false teachers lay siege. False teachers should not have access to the church as a platform for their teaching and people should not be deceived by what they hear in church.

**The Task of authentic Faith → Know what you believe, know who to believe, and know what to believe.**

Some jelly beans look like candy but tastes like stink socks. Some ideas and preaches wax eloquently but are destructive. Do not confusion personal passion and charisma with the power of the Gospel.

## The Test of Authentic Faith (4:1-3)

**If the task is to believe in Jesus, we are next challenge to not believe in everything else. The Word of the Lord commands us to Test the spirits.**

*Would it not be nice to have a test to determine the good from evil jelly beans?*

We have a powerful test of truth, authentic truth and faith.

**First, this test is not your opinions or feelings.** We have a lot of feelings in this room but only one Gospel. **Second, this test is not any one person or pastor.** Test what I say. **Third, this test is not the wisdom of the world or the culture.** Cultures change but God's Word is infallible and unchanging. Culture does not determine truth. Truth is absolute. **Fourth, half truths or nice sounding christianese are eternally damning.**

**What is the biblical test of authentic faith (4:2)?**

**The first metric is the majesty of Jesus Christ. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ. The measure or test is Christological**

Spirits from God confess Jesus Christ. It is important that that this truth be affirmed in the course of the confessional activity that defined Christian identity from the church's earliest days (ECNT).

Over and over again our faith, our existence, our hope is laid at the feet of Jesus Christ. To say as Paul “ **I want to know Christ- to know the power of his resurrection and participate in his sufferings, becoming like him in death.**

However- this test is the true Jesus. The Jesus Christ of the Bible, the only begotten of the Father. Who is fully God and fully human. Who lived a sinless life, died on the cross and rose again in three days. Who takes our sin and gives/ credits righteousness.

**2 John 7 issues a warning with at least formal parallels. The Jesus of the Qur'an comes to mind. In the Qur'an Jesus is a creature and in no sense an incarnation of God nor did he die on the cross (ECNT).**

**The second test of authentic faith and truth is confession of this Christ (4:2).**

Spirits from God confess Jesus Christ. It is important that that this truth be affirmed in the course of the confessional activity that defined Christian identity from the church's earliest days (ECNT).

Confession is essential because it is both an internal recognition and a public declaration of the authority of Jesus Christ in one's life. **9 If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation.**

Confession is key because recognizing that a person exists does not require confession. I am burdened that churches and including this one are filled with people who recognize Jesus intellectually but have not confessed him as Lord. They have walked an aisle, said a prayer, joined a church all without confessing Him as Lord.

How do you know? Confession = submission, life change, fruits of repentance and marks of radical grace and mercy. Confession is not a one time event but a point of departure into a new life. I have been crucified with Christ so it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me!

*Church here is your test: see everything through the lens of Jesus Christ and in humble submission to the King of kings.*

## The Triumph of Authentic Faith (4:1-3)

**We have heard our task. We have received our test. Now, let us rejoice in the triumph of His good news for us!**

You see- Jesus passed the test! Because Jesus passed the test we can conquer the world. John declares victory. His readers, in the midst of wrestling with the forces of evil, have already defeated them (ECNT).

**Victory in Christ not hoped for, it has been declared. We don't expect or believe in victory, we know! We are already lined upon victory formation waiting for Jesus Christ to return and take a knee.**

### **Conquered**

The perfect tense use of nikao- to conquer occurs in the NT only in John's writings (16:33 1 Jn 2:13, 14). John's use of the term is instructive. On the eve of the cross is own triumph: "But take heart" I have overcome the world! (ECNT).

On the lips of a man who was accurately predicting his imminent death and admitting his profound travail of soul, the words are baffling. They seem to contradict the reality of surrounding circumstances. **Surrounding circumstances are not the ultimate consideration; rather, the overarching will of God was rather the controlling image.**

### **The one who is in you is greater**

This is the ultimate "my dad can beat up your dad" trump card.

Spiritual security depends ultimately upon God's work within them by his Spirit, and there is no greater power than the Spirit of God what is able to destroy the work of antichrists. (Kruse).

In 2 Corinthians 4:7 – we are given this picture: "we have this treasure in Jars of clay, so that this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us."

There is eternal power in the Gospel. Great is He in you than in the world. Authentic Faith triumphs any difficulty, any antichrist, any circumstance, and any struggle. Live in triumph today!

## My Response to the Gospel

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**Seeing, accepting and embracing the love of Christ for you has radical consequences**

When do you not listen to the African wildlife expert? When he tells you to stand closer to a wild rhino.

That's what happened to a 24-year-old woman from South Africa. She was staying at the Aloe Ridge Hotel and Nature Reserve, about 25 miles from Johannesburg. The reserve advertises that it gives its guests "the ideal opportunity to game view," with rhinos listed among the animals "sighted at close range," along with hippos, Cape buffaloes and giraffes. Unfortunately, Chantal Beyer, one of the guests at the reserve, got a little *too* close.

Game park owner Alex Richter had reportedly told a group of visitors it was safe to get out of the safari vehicle to take photos, and he even used food to coax the rhinos closer.

A relative of Ms. Beyer told reporters, "There were quite a few young people on the vehicle and they probably felt they could trust Richter, who was an adult."

As the game park owner was snapping pictures, he advised Chantal to "stand just a little bit closer" seconds before the attack. Photos show Beyer and her husband only feet away from two rhinos.

The paper said that just after the photo was snapped, the rhino attacked, and its horn penetrated Ms. Beyers' chest from behind, resulting in a collapsed lung and broken ribs. The Aloe Ridge Hotel and Nature Reserve, where the incident took place, declined to comment.

***False teachings, half-truths, cultural Christianity, and tolerance of sin has deastating effects on your life. Some are standing near the rhino of death and destruction this morning.***

Do you know what you believe? Do you know who to believer? His name is Jesus

Have you confessed.

Greater is He who is in you than He who is in the world!

# Notes

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**1John 4:1** Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to determine if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

**Beloved** (agapetoi). John used this affection statement primarily to introduce weighty statement of fact (2:7, 3:2 3:21, 4:1, 4:7, 4:11).

There are many others who claim to be indwelt by God, to have received his Spirit, and to speak in his name (Kruse).

Believe (pisteuo- to believe). John is not warning readers against placing their faith in spirits (they have already trusted in the one true Christ). The construction rather connotes a prohibition against accepting what these spirits claim or the dark ethical impulses they may encourage (ECNT).

While the spirit of God is to be heeded and welcomed, these spirits are to be assessed and resisted.

## **Determine/Test.**

The verb dokimazo occurs twice in the LXX (Ps 26:1 and 139:23). In both cases the psalmist implores the Lord to test or search his heart, mind, thoughts, or some combination of these. Similarly, prospective deacons are to be “tested” (1 Tim 3:10).

Believing every spirit would connote a certain gullibility. Not everyone claiming to speak in the name of God actually does so (Kruse).

The criterion used in testing people’s claims is first stated positively then negatively (Kruse).

We are told here clearly that every true Christian is being called upon to test the spirits, not just a select few Christians (BW3).

But what should we look for? The Spirit of God always glorifies the Son of God. (NIV).

John is urging three things of our belief: the man Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the divine Word of God, Jesus was and is fully divine as well as fully human, Jesus is the sole source of eternal life since he reveals the father to us and atones for our sins (NIV)

## **False prophets**

By their very nature false prophets appear to be genuine and by their false teaching they lead people away from the truth (Kruse).

(ψευδοπροφήται). The term is applied in the New Testament to rivals of true prophets under the old dispensation (Luke 6:26; 2 Peter 2:1), and to rivals of the apostles under the gospel economy (Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22). In Revelation to “the embodied power of spiritual falsehood” (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). The false prophet supports his claims by signs and portents (Matthew 24:24; Acts 13:6; Revelation 19:20) and is thus distinguished from the false *teacher*. See 2 Peter 2:1, where the two terms occur together.

It echoes Jesus’s predictions of false prophets (Matt. 24:11), and it resonates with still broader 1<sup>st</sup> century concerns (ECNT).

Greco-Roman religion of the time trafficked heavily in secret or privileged knowledge of sacred mysteries. A Roman commander kept a Syrian prophetess named Martha with his army to give advice on important decisions; the Roman senate could settle an issue according to the prophetic pronouncement of a priest or priestess (Plutarch, Parallel Lives).

Notice our author does not question that these prophets are inspired. Inspiration is not a determinative criterion of truth. The question is, What is the source of this inspiration (BW3).

How do we unmask false teachers?

John warns us that false teachers lay siege. False teachers should not have access to the church as a platform for their teaching and people should not be deceived by what they hear in church.

**1 John 4:2** This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. **3** But every spirit who does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist; you have heard that he is coming, and he is already in the world now.

### **Confession**

Recognizing that a person exists does not require a confession (BW3).

### **The measure or test is Christological**

Spirits from God confess Jesus Christ. It is important that that truth be affirmed in the course of the confessional activity that defined Christian identity from the church’s earliest days (ECNT).

It should be remembered that the doctrinal test, however, is not the only test. The readers would understand that, along with doctrine, ethics and love are equally important calling cards of gospel truth.

2 John 7 issues a warning with at least formal parallels. The Jesus of the Qur’an comes to mind. In the Qur’an Jesus is a creature and in no sense an incarnation of God nor did he die on the cross (ECNT).

The content of the message both in Deuteronomy 13:2-6 and the Didache 11:7-8 are determining factors in teaching the truth (Kruse).

### **Has come**

He uses a perfect form of the verb ‘to come’ indicating that it is Christ’s status as one come in the flesh rather than simply the historic act of his coming that he had in mind (Kruse).

It was the humanity and personhood of Jesus that the secessionists denied.

Notice the key word here, *eleluthota* is in the perfect tense referring to the enduring effects of past events (BW3).

### Anti-Christ

Reflecting the already/not yet eschatology of the early church.

The aim of the antichrist is to deceive people by denying the truth about Jesus Christ, and in particular, within the context of 1 John, by denying the truth humanity of Christ (Kruse).

**1John 4:4** You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

John declares victory. His readers, in the midst of wrestling with the forces of evil, have already defeated them (ECNT).

John wants them to know that by their confession of Jesus come in the flesh they show that they ‘are from God.’ (Kruse).

### Conquered

The perfect tense use of *nikao*- to conquer occurs in the NT only in John’s writings (16:33 1 Jn 2:13, 14). John’s use of the term is instructive. On the eve of the cross is own triumph: “But take heart” I have overcome the world! (ECNT).

On the lips of a man who was accurately predicting his imminent death and admitting his profound travail of soul, the words are baffling. They seem to contradict the reality of surrounding circumstances. **Surrounding circumstances are not the ultimate consideration**; rather, the overarching will of God was rather the controlling image.

Spiritual security depends ultimately upon God’s work within them by his Spirit, and there is no greater power than the Spirit of God what is able to destroy the work of antichrists. (Kruse).

When our author uses the verb *nikao*, he speaks of Christians overcoming the Evil one, antichrists and the world. Notice how our author places all three of these adversaries who are overcome into one category (BW3).

**5 They are from the world. Therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them.**

John’s second test: has to do with audiences (NIV). John frequently refers to the world (24 times in the letters) and in some cases he sees it simply as a place of benign unbelief (NIV).

God’s people know his voice – like a sheep with a shepherd—and their corporate judgment should be trusted (NIV).

6 We are from God. Anyone who knows God listens to us; anyone who is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deception.

## Application

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“Christian faith does not mean leaving the intellect behind. Our author has no place for a naive acceptance of whatever feels good or seems inspiring at the time.” -- Loader

*But there is a difficult twist here as well. Our society prizes religious tolerance and pluralism to such a degree that many of us have begun to believe that such ‘testing’ betrays a narrowness of vision that is overly critical, even judgmental (NIV).*

The church is called to be a custodian of truth (NIV).

Any Christian cosmology that posits a personal God and angels should also have room for a personal devil and his cohorts (NIV).

## Big Questions

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### What is my message about?

Living for Truth

## Why is it important?

If you don't stand for something you will fall for anything

## What do I want them to do?

Seek the wisdom of Christ and know what you believe  
Know the truth, know Christ, know his word

## What is the single most persuasive idea?

The One who is in you is greater than the one in the world